

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims What is claimed is:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) An optical imaging contrast agent with affinity for an abnormally expressed biological target associated with vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque.
2. (Currently Amended) A contrast agent as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~with~~ molecular weight is below 14 000 Daltons.
3. (Currently amended) A contrast agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~ of formula I

V-L-R, (I)

wherein V is one or more vector moieties having affinity for an abnormally expressed target in vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque, L is a linker moiety or a bond and R is one ore more reporter moieties detectable in optical imaging.
4. (Currently amended) A contrast agent as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 comprising a contrast agent substrate, wherein the target is an abnormally expressed enzyme, such that the contrast agent changes pharmacodynamic properties and/or pharmacokinetic properties upon a chemical modification from a contrast agent substrate to a contrast agent product upon a specific enzymatic transformation.
5. (Currently amended) A contrast agent as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1 having affinity for any of the targets selected from kistrin, collagens, cathepsin B, cathepsin K, matrix metalloproteinase 3, matrix metalloproteinase 9, myeloperoxidase, urokinase, endothelin, CCR-2, C-reactive protein, angiotensin II receptors, CD36, CD40, folate receptor, SR-A, SR-B1, Toll-like receptor 4, uPAR, VEGF receptor, LOX-1, PPAR- γ , Factor XIII, HBP/Vigilin, perilipin.

6. (Currently amended) A contrast agent as claimed in ~~any of claims 3 to 5~~ claim 3 wherein V is selected from peptides, peptoid moieties, oligonucleotides, oligosaccharides, fat-related compounds, and traditional organic drug-like small molecules.
7. (Currently amended) A contrast agent as claimed in ~~any of claims 3-6~~ claim 3 wherein R is a dye that interacts with light in the wavelength region from the ultraviolet to the near-infrared part of the electromagnetic spectrum.
8. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition for optical imaging of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque comprising a contrast agent as defined in ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 together with at least one pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or excipient.
9. (Currently amended) ~~The Use of a~~ contrast agent as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 wherein the contrast agent is used for the manufacture of a diagnostic agent for use in a method of optical imaging of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque involving administration of said diagnostic agent to an animate subject and generation of an image of at least part of said subject.
10. (Currently amended) A method of optical imaging of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque of an animate subject involving administering a contrast agent as defined in ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 to the subject and generating an optical image of at least a part of the subject to which said contrast agent has distributed.
11. (Currently Amended) ~~The M~~method as claimed in claim 10 for diagnosis of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque, for follow up of the progress of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque development, for follow up of treatment of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque or for surgical guidance.
12. (Currently amended) ~~The Use of a~~ contrast agent as defined in ~~any of claim 1 to 7~~ claim 1 wherein the contrast agent is used for optical imaging of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque.
13. (Canceled) Use of a contrast agent as claimed in claim 12 for diagnosis of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque, for follow up of the progress of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque development, for follow up of treatment of vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque or for surgical guidance.